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Marie Steele to Sam Steele

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Macleod, July 15th 98.

My own darling Sam,

A fortnight has almost elapsed since I took my pen up to write you my darling, but you will forgive me I know when you learn my reasons. In the first place, our darling little Flora has been at death's threshold & only today do I feel, that with God's help, she will be left to us. She has been very very ill, in danger for days, but I think a turn for the better has set in. You know she went on a visit to Lethbridge on Monday, June 27th remaining a week. Mrs. Mac brought her back, she looked flushed & very thirsty all day. the next night, July 5th she awakened with a severe indigestion & diarrhea – by morning it had turned into dysentery. I had Dr. Haultain at 8.30 a.m & he found her very sick. Wednesday & Thursday we did all we could, but she kept getting worse – he went out after dinner determined to find a nurse. Mrs. Watson was ill but he went to Mrs. Monty. she was not going out, but in gratitude for a good turn you did her some years ago in warning her they were endeavoring to get her son George to marry a half breed, she Came & has been here since. On Friday I telegraphed Regie who came Saturday morning – she got a bad turn Friday p.m & I feared she was dying –
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she was a little better on Saturday, so Regie returned. Sunday was a very bad day & night but she seemed a wee bit better Monday [morn] – about 4 p.m she got a very bad again & we rushed for Dr. Haultain & I telegraphed Regie again. Mrs. Monty thought it was nearing the end. My God! when I think of what I have been through, with you so far!, I thought my heart would break! I could not write & say all were well & I could not tell you the awful state the little darling was in! – O! darling, it is terrible to be so far apart, with these links of love that bind us so closely together!!!. I pray God, she will pick up, but she needs careful watching & care & will be a long time getting over the effects of this severe illness. She is made of splendid stuff & bore her sufferings so patiently, poor dear! she was quite resigned to die, her one fear all through has been your absence & she hoped to see Papa once more – she has dreamed & spoken of you all the time & I cannot but

feel that you must know something has been wrong with her. she has seen & heard you so often & we could not convince her you had not come back to us!. She needs a great deal of nourishment – had we been on the way I never could have saved her, for she has had very strong medicine & the Dr. watched her very carefully – she passed blood & mucus for days & her whole system stomach & bowels must be perfectly raw & much inflamed [sic] – poor little tot! her nose would bleed every

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time she raised her head & the vomiting was constant for days!. I tell you dear, I felt sometimes as if Providence had deserted me & that all my misery & trouble was to come when you were not near to help me bear it. Of course, I trusted in God, but how hard it has been to bear all my burdens alone!. The others so far are well – baby is cutting a new tooth. Your dear letter of the 20th of June I received on the 8th. You tell me of another trip to Tagish & White Horse Rapids. Mrs. Godson must regret having gone up, as she will be unable to live at the summit – it must have been a great expense as well to her. I intend remaining here until Sept & then going East if plans are not changed again. Mr. Zack Wood wrote me on the 30th of June & said the Pass was impassable owing to high water & dead horses etc – that he had written you telling you about the quarters here, & that you would wire me – so far I have not had one telegram about it & he said he would wire me as soon as he heard from you. You know now that I cannot stay in Macleod. The Deane's are coming up & I must go somewhere. I do not look well now, dear, my troubles have pulled me down very much & Dr. Mewburn advised me to take a change of some sort. He said I was much in need of it. Flora's condition is such, that in any case I cannot venture to travel with her until Sept on account of her weakness & the heat. Then there being no Dr. in Tagish I am afraid to venture now – another attack would

[reverse]

prove fatal if I had no Dr. near. As you have to move about so much I know it is better for us not to be in the way & I have written to see what arrangements I can make with Mamma. I cannot remain in Macleod there is no house to rent & I have had so much trouble since you left me, that I feel I must leave. Any way, I need doctoring up. You particularly mention having no Dr. & I feel that you will be more determined than ever when you hear of Flora's illness. Your two letters of the 1 & 2nd of July have just this moment come to me – the first I have had since that of the 20th answered a few seconds ago. there may be some in between delayed on the way. I cannot

understand how my letters take so long to reach you – our post office is very badly managed. D.J. Campbell has been away for a long time & the place has been run by a boy & girl who in many ways have been very negligent. The children cried bitterly when I told them we were not to go up, they love you & talk of you incessantly. I have had no telegram as I said before from either of the two you mention, that is, none that could have been sent by them for you. the last was “do not leave Macleod, am writing” sent by Major Perry. Baby got over scarlatina all right, & looks splendid, if the heat does not prove too much for him. The place must be very pretty after Macleod – my darling, your letter of the 1st is so inviting in its description of the surroundings, that I much regret we will not be there – nothing frightened me & I was anxious to go, but things are changed now. I would fear bringing Flora. I have

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not congratulated you dear on your promotion to “Lt. Col., the Commissionership of the Yukon & one of the Council” as I have not heard it from you or officially in any way, but it appeared in all the papers & I hope it is true. Major Wood is to take your place & you are ordered to Dawson I hear – of course, under all these changes, I would not think of leaving for Tagish in any case, until I hear from you. Regie got my dining room furniture – I let him have it in return for the \$100.00 he telegraphed the manager of the Vancouver Hotel at your request early in February – so that is all right I suppose, dear. he is to commence building in Aug & his house will be finished by Sept. – he will likely buy my bedroom sett [sic] & I am going to try & sell the piano. I got the June & July pay in advance – it came to \$228.66. I had to pay Mannsell Bros \$191.00 the other day – that was the whole thing & glad I am it is off my mind. I drew \$104.10 from Savings & Loan – paid \$26.60 to Barker, Millar & Gardiner, \$39.00 on saddle, \$33.50 cts. on Life Insurance which comes to \$290.10 cts. also \$41.60 cts. to Canteen, bringing it up to a total of \$341.70 ct. I had to break on the \$200.00 sent & have to pay Marie yet, besides using some for current expenses. Flora’s nurse & medicine (extras) will bring up [Barne’s] bill which was \$38.00 before you left, those large pictures being very expensive. You see darling, I do not waste a cent, but the bills owing, especially Mannsell’s were heavy. The rations help, but do not keep me going, there being extra ones as you see. I hate bothering you but I must tell you how I stand financially. Alec’s plan of selling “Empire” fell

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through as I expected. Mr. McKenzie says Capt. Mac does not want to sell

the stock but Mr. A. B. said he would attend to it for me. I have not seen the latter for some three weeks or two it is. He is sending Margaret to the Ursuline Convent in Quebec & Gertie Gigot goes also. Mr. Gigot goes to Germany in a short time to see his mother who is ill & not likely to last long. We are having a funeral this p.m. [Scuddamore] (I think that is the way to spell his name) & several others went in bathing on the night before last – the former suddenly threw up his arms & disappeared – it was down near Jo's & the water not waist deep – they thought he was fooling but rushed to his assistance – he could not be seen anywhere – they did all in their power with grappling hooks etc but could not find him until yesterday morning, when after firing three times with the big gun, the body rose to the surface. He has been building a little home & his wife & five children they say, sailed from Wales the very day he was drowned. Such is life!. I see by today's B.C. papers that the Rev. Mr. Lyon also lost his life in Lake Bennett. such awful catastrophes frighten me, I assure you. I think Mrs. Sander's told me the other day he had baptised Girlie. Mr. Hilton has another anglo-saxon in the family - Cedric Norman McLean Hilton. You see my darling, from my account of the way the cash goes that

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I am very saving & doing my best to pay all we owe, before I leave – in fact, I do believe I would be stopped on the way if I did not, always excepting the Macfarland note. Yours of the 2nd now lies open before me my darling, - Your last are short ones, dear – our plans have been changed so often that I am almost at my wit's end to know what is right. I must tell you however that before I go, I must either go to Lethbridge or Montreal for treatment. Dr. Mewburn told me if I went up as I am I would be a wreck in a short time. I was torn when Baby was born & need an operation or two to get better. I did not want to tell you, but I think it better to do so – he said “if you knew my condition he was positive you would not want me to go where there is no dr. near.” It is hard to have all changed at the last & then this appointment of yours necessitates your going to Dawson, I am told – at least the papers say so. You will, I feel sure write at once. “Mrs. Zack goes only as far as Skagway & is to return by the same boat” Mr. Wood said & since reiterated by Mrs. Wood to Mrs. Wroughton, who is charmed with Zack's promotion in rank – a good many are green eyed I fancy. Fred White has lost his youngest child a little girl of 4 years & a half. She had measles last winter & never got over them altogether. He is sadly afflicted is he not? I have to send \$12.00 for 4 copies you ordered of “Men & women of the time” – these bills keep me under all

[reverse]

the time, try as I will. I will try & get any pay in advance as I will have nothing before the middle of Sept. if I do not & there is still some owing the Canteen – they are bills made before you left, as I have paid, Canteen, butcher & etc monthly since your departure. Of course, the things I purchased, clothing for children cost me something, as I got what I considered they could not do without for two years – it will all come in, still I could have purchased by degrees & would have felt it less, than all at once. Mrs. Monty has been here ten days & will certainly be here another week, for Flora cannot move & I cannot lift or carry her myself – at \$2.00 a day you can see what I will have to pay. Pray God! you will be able to make money, as I fear, you will find a wife & family very hard to support. I enclose a copy of a receipt brought by Mrs. Potts & written in your hand, earl some time about the end of June. I went to Cowdry's & found no money there – asked Morgan & Murrison & they could not tell me, as the latter gave me a copy of the receipt to send you. Can you recall the circumstance – I know she gave you \$60.00 when she was living with us, but that was from Oct. to Feb. 1897 – she gave it I think, in Jan or Dec. was this a second \$60.00? I know nothing of it, but you may remember – she is now married to Mr. John W. Kennedy & resides at Kipp, Montana, as per address on back of receipt & looks blooming, is as happy as can be & oh! he is so good to her.

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Are you going to be terribly disappointed at not seeing us, dear? still, if it is really true that you are to move to Dawson you would scarcely expect us this winter. If you can be comfortable & find it convenient, we may go later. We will be far enough apart, will we not dear – too far to quarrel. Morgan has got a position in C.P.R. commencing work today. We will say nothing of Mrs. Mac remarks concerning Elmes – there was some truth in them, for I found that out for myself to my great regret. things are going better now – he is auditor of C.P.R. & is working steadily at present. Alec distinguished himself one night at the mess, during his last visit & was put out – a mess meeting held next day & he was forbidden to enter the door again – he was under the influence & did or said something to Capt. Deane – his wife was here & knew nothing of it. Mrs. Davidson told us about it & was heartily ashamed of her uncle. I could go on forever it seems to me – so many things crowd up to be told, that my pen cannot keep time with my thoughts. some things must be left unsaid. I wrote about English goods & ordered them when I told you, but have had no word of them so far. Uncle Willie left everything to strangers, ignoring Min & Mamma completely – not even

giving Regie instruments & books he gave him de viva voce some years ago. mean, was he not? He left Mrs. [McGillivray], Alec's step sister \$1.000.00, but she died in May, so I do not know who will get it, unless Uncle [Ewen]

[reverse]

does to whom he left most. the poor fellow was fooled out of his share of the estate by the Bowie's & they will take this too, if they can; he is not fit to look after his own business –

Saturday. Well, dear our darling Flora had a fairly good night & is taking more nourishment – the bowels are still bad, but improving slowly, so I hope my next letter will tell you she is much better. I cannot get a serge in store, they have not one suitable. Sergt. Morris is acting like the mischief to me now – why I do not know, unless it is because he wanted a place at the C.N.R. wrote Mrs. Harwood, used my name, but got no reply. that is not very kindly & I trust I will have a chance yet of making him feel it. The Dr. ordered medicine late at night & he (Morris) sent me word to go early & not to forget I was not in his district now – he sent the message by Congdon. I spoke to the Dr. about it. I would not be paid to remain here – things are so different when a poor, helpless, woman has to face everything alone!.

Morris also said “the brandy sent for Flora was only loaned” – brandy is only given to families on repayment now, still he need not have told me that now. I will have to buy a bottle of brandy & return it, so you see dear all the expense I have to bear. I am heartily sick of them all & will be glad to shake the dust of Macleod off my feet, I assure you & say it from the bottom of my heart. If I need money when I leave, am

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I to get it from Mr. Cowdry? I may not have enough to get to Montreal & settled without that. I hope your salary will be increased & that you will make money so that we will soon be reunited once more. Alice, Regie Elmes are well; so are the other two little ones & send love. Flora sends her darling Papa many sweet kisses & knows you will be glad to learn she is getting better. God bless you & keep you safe until we meet again. Write soon to

Your poor heart-sick, weary, tried little wifie

Maye.

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